Artists' Fund Society records

AO.007

Finding Aid updated by Hoang Tran

PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY
OF THE FINE ARTS

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Summary Information

Repository	The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Dorothy & Kenneth Woodcock Archives
Creator	Artists' Fund Society
Title	Artists' Fund Society records
Call number	AO.007
Date [bulk]	
Date [inclusive]	1835-1868
Extent	½ document box
Language	English
Abstract	This collection consists of AFS Annual Exhibition catalogues and a prospectus, a membership list, and a subscription receipt. A charter and by-laws, several other exhibition catalogues, and two speeches are included in the Lambdin pamphlet collection. Also see the master's thesis: *The Artists' Fund Society of Philadelphia, 1835-1845*, by Ellen Wood Ramsey (University of Iowa, 1990) in the Academy library. Most of this collection has been microfilmed by the Archives of American Art. See the reel numbers listed below.

Preferred Citation note

[identification of item], Title of Collection, Collection ID#, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

Historical note

On Valentine's Day, 1835, eleven Philadelphia artists came together at the home of John Neagle to found the Artists' Fund society. The following April the Society was incorporated to "promote the welfare and happiness of themselves and their professional brethren" by creating a fund for their "mutual advancement and relief." In addition to the desire to provide financial assistance to artists and their families in times of adversity, the stated objects of the institution were to promote "the cultivation of skill, the diffusion of taste, and the encouragement of living professional talent in the arts of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Engraving, as may best conduce the primary purpose of benevolence."S Guided by this lofty commitment to art, morality, and Philanthropism, the Artists' Fund Society aspired to build and manage their own school and gallery.

Beneficence provided the Society with the philosophical justification for its activities and for the leadership role it assumed in the cultural community, but initially, the Artists' Fund Society's importance to Philadelphia artists had little to do with charity. The philanthropic dimension of the Society's plan was not well developed until after 1847. Between 1835 and 1845 the Artists' Fund Society constituted the primary institutional support for contemporary art activity in Philadelphia. During this decade the Pennsylvania Academy faced financial problems and was largely inactive. 9 In the absence of a functioning Academy, the Society assumed much of the responsibility for artists' professional development and encouragement. The Artists' Fund Society was the first art organization in Philadelphia to be managed exclusively by artists; therefore, it reflected the artists' definition of an ideal professional climate. Nationally, the Society was the second American art institution to operate under artists' control, predated by the National Academy of Design which was founded in 1826. Coinciding with the goals of its New York competitor, the Artists' Fund Society aspired to raise the status of the artist "to its merited rank in public estimation," to establish a school and library.

Ramsey, Ellen Wood. The Artists' Fund Society of Philadelphia 1835-1845. University of Iowa, 1990.

Scope and Contents note

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Arrangement note

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access note

Collection is open for research.

The archives reserves the right to restrict access to materials of sensitive nature. Please contact the department for further information.

Conditions Governing Use note

The collection is the physical property of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives. The Museum holds literary rights only for material created by Museum personnel or given to the Museum with such rights specifically assigned. For all other material, literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. Researchers are responsible for obtaining permission from rights holders for publication and for other purposes where stated.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Provenance note

Processing Information note

Processed by

Controlled Access Headings

Person(s)

Corporate Name(s)

Genre(s)

Geographic Name(s)

Subject(s)

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements note

Collection Inventory

Folder Title	Date	Box	Folder
List of Members (a letter from Thomas B. Ashton, Secretary of the AFS to Thomas P. Roberts, Treasurer, containing "a list of artists, members of the Artists' Fund Society, and others not members of that institution, with the addresses of each as far as ascertained," 1836, filmed on reel P63:1061-63. Receipt, 1840, for $25.00 subscription to the AFS for William Wilson, signed by J.R. Lambdin. Unfilmed	1836, 1840	1	1
AFS Annual Exhibition Catalogues, 1835-45, (bound set and loose copies), and a prospectus for 1835. Catalogues for 1835-42 are filmed on reel P40:774-839; catalogues for 1843-45 on reel P38:995-1021.	1835-45	1	2-12
Catalogue of the AFS Exhibition of February 1867, filmed on reel P52:175-82. The catalogue of the AFS Spring Exhibition of 1868 is filmed on reel P52:183-88.		1	13
Other materials related to the Artists' Fund Society are preserved as printed pamphlets in the Lambdin pamphlet collection. They are: *Charter and By-laws of the Artists' Fund Society*, 1836, filmed on reel: P38:19-27. *National and Commercial Utility and Profit of the Arts of Design*, an address by William Carey, delivered July 3, 1838. Filmed on reel P38:100-20. *The Prospects of Art in the United States*, an address by George Bethune, delivered May, 1840. Filmed on reel P38:66-89. Other exhibition catalogues, either exhibitions sponsored by the AFS or held at their hall: *Catalogue of the Collection of Original Drawings Belonging to M. Alexandre Vattemare*, n.d., filmed on reel P40:850-58. *Catalogue of Robert Street's Exhibition at the Artists' Fund Hall*, 1840, filmed on reel P40:840-48. *Great Exhibition of Religious Paintings, by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, at the Artists' Fund Society*, 1843, filmed on reel P41:740-60.			